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SUBJECT: SUPPORTING ACTIVISTS FOR DEMOCRACY AND DISSIDENTS

REF: SECSTATE 44903

¶1. Post proactively initiates, encourages and supports outreach to activists for democracy and dissidents in un-free nations. In the past year, Post worked with several indigenous and international NGOs to provide training, resources and moral support to civil society organizations in Belarus, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Serbia. Many of the NGOs Embassy Bratislava works with came of age during Slovakia's own struggle with authoritarianism in the late 1990s. By supporting their activities in countries with which Slovakia shares a historical, geographic or ethnic connection, Post is able to multiply the outcomes from the limited resources we can devote to the President's "Freedom Agenda."

¶2. On May 3, 2007 Post hosted a direct video conference for Christian Science Monitor journalist Michael J. Jordan with journalists in Uzbekistan. A frank exchange took place on the limits placed on journalists by Uzbek authorities, and Mr. Jordan shared strategies to cope in such situations. The conference led to an article published in the Christian Science Monitor on May 15 decrying the abuses in Uzbekistan and the lack of attention from major Western media.

¶3. From February to May, 2007 Post provided financial support to the Slovak NGO "Local Government Development Centre" for a project aimed at strengthening democracy in local governments in Kazakhstan.

¶4. Post supported a Pontis Foundation project that sent Slovak experts to two Serbian regions in September-October 2007 to impart Slovakia's experiences with EU integration and transatlantic cooperation. The experts advised local officials in Serbia on how to develop networks, mobilize local technical expertise, and cooperate with SMEs, NGOs and the media to address regional problems.

¶5. Post helped introduce professional journalism skills to local TV broadcasters in Kunduz, Afghanistan through a grant to the NGO "On Your Side." Slovak experts trained journalists, camera operators and technicians in practical skills, including how to share know-how with a wider audience of local journalists. Slovak trainers also shared their experiences with freedom of information legislation, and counseled Afghan journalists on how Slovak journalists ensure balance and fairness in the news, and maintain good relations between journalists and local self-governments.

¶6. The Slovak NGO "People in Peril" received Embassy support for a program in five provinces of Afghanistan (Kabul, Parwan, Kapisa, Nangarhar and Lagham) to increase the effectiveness of an advocacy unit at the Afghan Women's Resource Centre. In April and May 2007 the program encouraged citizen participation in democracy building, human rights - including specifically the rights of women in Islam and rights of children - health and environment issues, and

psychological counseling.
OBSITNIK